



Maine Wildlife Park 2010 Year in Review



What a fast year! 2010 at the Maine Wildlife Park flew by so quickly half of us are still wondering where it went. This is in part due to another busy year of attendance, with the park's total visitors just sneaking past our very busy 2009 business. And if 2009's season could be characterized by rain, 2010's answer was heat, *lots* of heat. Despite less than desirable weather and economic conditions for two consecutive years, it is very encouraging to see the park continue to grow despite these hurdles. The park has again achieved record revenue figures and broke several attendance records for our special events during 2010. The Maine Wildlife Park and the Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife are truly fortunate to have our large corps of volunteers to thank for these accomplishments and the continued operation of this facility.



The park could accurately be described as a melting pot of many ideas, energies and talents. Volunteers work with the park's staff to accomplish things that would otherwise be unobtainable. Examples include everything from a flower garden that wouldn't otherwise be planted to a gatehouse that would be little more than an unstaffed outpost. Every single day, the park's volunteers, Friends and MCC Workers contribute something to keeping this facility running, or at the very least, make it a better place to visit.

One volunteer who served as a perfect example of this park service was Connie Kippax. Sadly, Connie passed away in July from an ongoing battle with cancer. Connie was a tremendous worker and help to the park for over 17 years. She did it all at the park: gardening, guided tours, special programs and events, the gatehouse, off-site presentations, and much more. In 2003 Connie was awarded the Superintendent's Award by Dave Wilbur for her service. She will always be remembered at the park, and a memorial garden has been designated at the mountain lion exhibit, one of Connie's favorite animals.

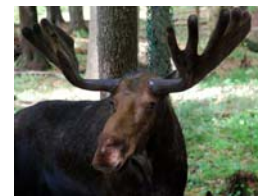


Whether a volunteer works at the park for well over a decade like Connie, or just for a season, the donated time and energy of a volunteer is admirable sacrifice that can never be over-stated. The commitment that so many people have to the park is truly inspiring, with nearly 9,000 hours of volunteering annually and countless miles of commuting. Working at the park makes one realize just how effective a body of motivated individuals can be!

2010 Summary

The effectiveness described above can be demonstrated by the park's 2010 season. The park hosted over 104,600 visitors this year. While this figure serves as a modest increase over 2009, the inherent economic and weather-related challenges make any increase very encouraging. With a nearly \$15,000 increase in revenue, this attendance also allowed for another record high revenue figure for the park!

2010 was an excellent year for well-attended special events. In fact, the park broke records for all three of our biggest events; the Native American Pow-Wow, the Rich Charette Concert, and Halloween-Fest. Overall, these events realized a 6.7% increase over 2009. We can't help but ask the question; just how many cars can Dave Wilbur fit in the parking lot? Needless to say, these events not only serve to bring in lots of people, but lots of fun and excitement for park staff and volunteers.



The park's special events are continually proving to be big draws for the park and undoubtedly serve to bring in new patrons who wouldn't otherwise visit. For those who come to the park for a specific event or performer, many of these visitors are seeing the park for the first time ever or for many years, and subsequently come back to bring us new business and word-of-mouth advertising. This is why the park has experimented with new events in addition to improving some of our existing programs. Our new Moose Madness Day on May 1 brought in over 1,000 people and was one of our busiest days of the year. Combined with the three big events mentioned above, these programs comprised over 8% of our total attendance in 2010 (over 8,500 people)!



One park event that has received the biggest makeover has been our Halloween-Fest. This event has grown by leaps and bounds, and is now made possible by a small army of volunteers to assist staff in preparing for and working at the event. About 85 volunteers and staff made this year's two-night program a great success. Inland Fisheries and Wildlife Commissioner Roland Martin expressed his thanks to all volunteers and staff who made the event possible.



A major new program launched in 2010 was our new cell phone audio tour. Over 7,100 calls were made into the system, for a total of 186 hours of listening! Which exhibits received the most calls? The raccoons and the fisher! The audio tour is not only an excellent tool for the public to learn more about our animals, but a great way for volunteers to learn more about the wildlife at the park as well. The tour can be accessed from anywhere in the world by dialing 207-228-1700 and entering the numbers that correspond on the park map.

The Nature Store and Snack Shack had another excellent season in 2010. The Nature Store's gross revenue increased by 5% and net revenue by 19% over 2009 - Wow! For those of you who weren't able to make it into the store this year, make sure to stop in early in 2011 to see all the decorative changes that continue to improve the store every year. The Snack Shack also had an excellent year and continues to offer a variety of snacks that are a crucial component in generating smiles among our visitors.

Finally, park staff and volunteers received excellent feedback on the completed small mammal exhibits, the new signage throughout the park, and other changes that took place in 2010. Nobody mentioned missing the old row, and the small mammals have certainly expressed their preference though positively altered behaviors as they settle into their new homes. The Department extends sincere thanks again to the Friends of the Maine Wildlife Park for making the six new exhibits possible.



Winter and Beyond

The park staff is geared up for another winter of *major* changes at the park. The new mountain lion display project is in its early stages. When the project is ultimately finished in late 2011-2012, the cougars, lynx and bobcats will reside in new homes as a result of new construction and relocation. With the cougars in the new exhibit, the lynx will take up residence in the old cougar display, and the bobcats will inherit the old lynx display. This will provide each species with an "upgrade" in their living quarters. Once again, we can thank the Friends for the majority of the funding of this exciting new project!

During this winter, early project phases will include the relocation of the lynx, the old female bobcat and their existing enclosures. This is necessary to prepare the site of the new cougar exhibit, which will much larger, and requires that additional space be prepared. The electrical and water utilities for the new exhibit will also be installed this winter, which will also be combined with another phase of our waterline upgrade project; an ongoing comprehensive replacement of the park's entire water system. This project has and will span several years as we opportunistically replace our outdated black plastic pipe system in phases.



The park is usually very fortunate to receive free publicity on a regular basis. This winter is no exception, as our Gray Fox will be featured for the season's entire duration in the Sun Journal. In a light-hearted experiment, our Gray is being tested for her weather prediction abilities as compared to the Farmer's Almanac. Questions and answers will appear on page A2 every Wednesday until spring. The park's turtles and bull moose were also featured in the Sun Journal right after New Years. The park will also be featured on a "Haskell From the House" cable broadcast in mid

February. Finally, the park's bald eagle "Lawrence" will be getting some of his own publicity this winter as the parks off-season ambassador. With the anticipation of launching a permanent program during the off-season, the park is experimenting this winter with off-campus programs that feature our visiting eagle and staff.

Winter at the park is not only a time for park staff to work on the major projects listed above, but on many other maintenance needs. Our staff members are not exclusively animal caretakers, but "Jacks of all trades" in their versatility and skill sets. The park is fortunate to have employees like these who contribute to the facility's operation in so many ways. We also receive tremendous support from the Maine Correctional Center in Windham, which sends work crews on a daily basis to assist park staff. These crew workers have similar talents that are of tremendous benefit to maintaining and improving this facility. This combined workforce of staff and volunteers has already accomplished much during the first month and a half of our closed season.

In all seasons at the Maine Wildlife Park, our successes and accomplishments can be attributed to this same partnership between park staff and volunteers. On behalf of the Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife and the entire staff at the Maine Wildlife Park, I would like to extend my sincere thanks for all of your hard work and continued support of the park in 2010.

We look forward to seeing you all again for the 2011 season!

Sincerely, Curt Johnson, MWP Superintendent



